

The Olympic Games and Protest Movements

Opportunities for educational activities

Written by Michael Pollak

One of the great historical themes of the Olympics revolves around the heroic tales of individuals triumphing over oppressive and racist governments through sporting achievement. Any oppressive regime supports its policies by arguing that one group – whites or Aryans or communists are superior to other groups like blacks or non-communists or Jews.

The Olympics tend to make racists look very stupid. Hitler argued that blacks are inferior and in front of his eyes a black American called Jesse Owens outclassed the white runners in all the sprint events. The Soviets may have had more tanks than the Czechs when they entered Prague in 1968 but the dignified protest of Czech gymnast Vera Caslavskya lingers in the memory more than any number of tanks.

The Olympics and sport in general can turn the persecuted into the triumphant. Here are some resources illustrating some of the great sporting acts of political defiance with some suggestions for discussions and activities to reflect on the foolishness of tyranny.

Overview of this resource:

- | | Suggested time frame |
|--|-----------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trigger Activities
2 possible activities to introduce the topic of protest | 15mins each |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Method
4 examples of protest in sport
Split your group into 4, each group should cover one story | 25mins each |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Defying Hitler 2) Jesse Owens races past Nazis to strike Gold 3) Facing Down the Soviet Empire 4) Shaming the oppressors with power, style and grace | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conclusion Activities | 15mins |

Trigger Activities

Choose between the 2 trigger activities below and use the discussion points underneath to conclude.

- 1) Split up into 3 groups. They are each to prepare a protest on the issue of hunting with dogs
 - a) Group Alpha is against all hunting
 - b) Group Beta is in favour of all hunting
 - c) Group Gamma is in favour but only if it is licensed and controlled.

They need to design posters, write slogans and a song.

- 2) Split into two groups. One is in favour of going to Jewish schools whilst the other is against. They are asked to represent their views in a TV debate

Give them their rules but do not tell them the rules of the other group beforehand. Give them 10 minutes prep time to construct arguments according to their rules

Rules of the debate

- Ask the participants to face each other.
- Taking it in turns to speak. They must instantly respond to each other
- Group Alpha are only allowed to shout
- Group Alpha must never use words of more than two syllables
- Group Beta are not allowed to shout
- Group Beta must use sentences of more than 10 words

They need to design posters, write slogans and a song.

Discussion points:

- What did the groups find easy about their protest?
- What did the groups find difficult about the different types of protest?
- Which were the strongest arguments from each debate?
- Which group created the most successful protest?
- Is it easier to protest *against* something than creating a reasoned and balanced argument?

Explain that within the rest of the session you will be exploring different examples of protest that have taken place within sport, and you will therefore be able to analyse different forms of protest in more detail at the end of the session.

Defying Hitler

Aston Villa 2 Adolf Hitler 0

My personal favourite. You might know of the English football team's Nazi salute¹ in Germany, 1938 (see image.3, below). Villa also went on tour with England and played the following day. When asked to perform the salute, they refused, sparking a diplomatic row. Eric Houghton, former player, director and cup winning manager of the Villa recalled

When we played the next day - we were Aston Villa, against Lowenburg, or somebody like that - they treated it more or less as an international match. Our manager, Jimmy Hogan, said "They'll expect you to perform the Nazi salute." The FA fella in charge of the England team had come to our manager and said "We've had a chat about it and we think it would be better if your players gave the Nazi salute to be really friendly." We had a meeting about this and George Cummings and Alec Massie and the Scots lads said "'There's no way we're giving the Nazi salute." so we didn't give it. Our argument was that we were a club side and not an international side.

Anyway, they treated us very well, but it did leave a bit of a nasty taste in the mouth, us refusing to give the Nazi salute. The next time they said we'd got to give the Nazi salute, you see, so we had a meeting and said that, for peace and quietness we'd give the Nazi salute. At the next place, I think it was Stuttgart, both teams gave the Nazi salute, so we went to the centre of the field and gave them the two finger salute and they cheered like mad. They thought it was all right. They didn't know what the two fingers meant.

Resources

- 1) Daily Express reports Villa defiance (Full Page)
- 2) Daily Express reports Villa defiance (Page blown up to show article)
- 3) England football team giving Nazi salute in 1938

1 The next game between the two teams, and the last to be played before [World War II](#), was again in Germany, a friendly at the [Olympic Stadium](#) in Berlin on 14 May 1938, played in front of a crowd of 110,000 people. It was the last occasion on which England played against a unified German team until the 1990s. This was the most controversial of all the early encounters between the two teams, as before kick-off the English players were ordered by the [Foreign Office](#) to line up and perform a [Nazi salute](#) in respect to their hosts. How compliant the players were with this situation has been a matter of debate, with a feature in *The Observer* in 2001 speculating that they were "perhaps merely indifferent players (who had undoubtedly become more reluctant, to the point of mutiny, by the time the post-war memoirs were published)." Taken from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/England_and_Germany_football_rivalry#cite_note-Katwala-4

Image 1:

UJIA

Powering young people in the UK and Israel

Image 1:

DAVID BEN-GURION, Prime Minister, May 16, 1938.

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BIG CABINET RESHUFFLE PLANNED AT ONCE

Britain buys £3,000,000 meat for war larder

By the KENNETH PIPE

Daily Express Agricultural Reporter

BRITAIN'S new meat larder, now stored with wheat, sugar, and other food, is being nearly £2,000,000 worth of meat and another £1,000,000.

I understand that at the suggestion of Sir Henry F. Jones, head of the Food (Home) Department, the Government have decided to buy £3,000,000 worth of meat and another £1,000,000.

The Government have decided to buy £3,000,000 worth of meat and another £1,000,000.

Premier sees the King today: Industrialist as air production chief

Daily Express Political Correspondent

MR. NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN, THE PRIME MINISTER, RETURNED FROM CHEQUERS TO NO. 10, DOWNING STREET LAST NIGHT AFTER HAVING BEEN AT WORK ALL THE WEEK-END ON PROBLEMS OF CABINET CHANGES.

Today Mr. Chamberlain is expected to have an audience of the King before the King leaves on a four-day tour of Lancashire with the Queen.

Details of a Cabinet reshuffle will probably be made public within the next forty-eight hours.

It is believed that Mr. Chamberlain intends to make his major re-arranging of the Cabinet immediately instead of waiting until the autumn as had originally been planned.

Well informed politicians think that there would be some re-arranging of the Cabinet immediately instead of waiting until the autumn as had originally been planned.

BOOKIES TO PAY £1,000,000 TAX

Daily Express Staff Reporter

STOCKBROKERS of bookmakers have now agreed to pay £1,000,000 income tax on profits made, as Lord Horder's Trust accepts the offer.

They have accepted the offer of £1,000,000 income tax on profits made, as Lord Horder's Trust accepts the offer.

STRANGERS AT 'MURDER SERVICE'

Daily Express Staff Reporter

STRANGERS who attended the village church of Fawcett, York, last night in the hope of seeing Jessie Peel, the village storekeeper who was acquitted at Leeds Assizes of murdering his wife, were told by the vicar, speaking from his pulpit—

"Go home, and think how you have mocked your God this night."

Wreckers cut cinema screen Sunday show stopped

Daily Express Staff Reporter

"Wreckers cut cinema screen Sunday show stopped"

Bruen loses as U.S. Walker Cup men near Britain

Daily Express Staff Reporter

"Bruen loses as U.S. Walker Cup men near Britain"

AIR SUPPLY COMMITTEE PLACES ALL ORDERS

Daily Express Staff Reporter

"AIR SUPPLY COMMITTEE PLACES ALL ORDERS"

Seized medicine bottles mystery

Daily Express Staff Reporter

"Seized medicine bottles mystery"

JAPAN BREAKS THROUGH

Daily Express Staff Reporter

"JAPAN BREAKS THROUGH"

Seized medicine bottles mystery

Daily Express Staff Reporter

"Seized medicine bottles mystery"

Villa booted by Germans, refuse Nazi salute

From HENRY ROSE

BERLIN, Sunday.

A STON VILLA football team were booted off the field by 110,000 people at the Olympic Stadium in Berlin, this afternoon, after they had defeated a German eleven (ten of them were ex-German international) by three goals to two.

They had inflicted the crowd all through the match by playing the offside game.

The home team, who were the Ston Villa, were booted off the field by 110,000 people at the Olympic Stadium in Berlin, this afternoon, after they had defeated a German eleven (ten of them were ex-German international) by three goals to two.

SPONTANEOUS

Daily Express Staff Reporter

SPONTANEOUS

VANISHED COUNT IS IN NAPLES

Daily Express Staff Reporter

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Good morning - Good coffee - Good breakfast

Daily Express Staff Reporter

Good morning - Good coffee - Good breakfast

'CAMP' coffee

Daily Express Staff Reporter

'CAMP' coffee

Image 2:

Villa booed by Germans, refuse Nazi salute

From HENRY ROSE

BERLIN, Sunday.

ASTON VILLA football team were booed off the field by 110,000 people at the Olympic Stadium in Berlin this afternoon, after they had defeated a German eleven (ten of them were ex-Austrian internationals) by three goals to two.

They had irritated the crowd all through the match by playing the offside game.

The booing grew when, towards the end of the match, Massie, Villa's Scottish international right half, came in collision with Schmaus, the German left back.

Schmaus was carried off the field on a stretcher, but was able to return.

After the match the German players lined up to give the Nazi salute. The Villa team, with the exception of Allen, the captain, and one or two others, ran off the field.

Allen tried to call the players back, but they refused to return. Finally Allen joined the rest and the band tried to drown the din of booing.

It was an unfortunate end to a bad game. The view of Football Association officials who watched the game was that all the good work of the previous day, when England had defeated Germany 6-3 in the international in a friendly atmosphere, had been completely destroyed.

SPONTANEOUS

Jimmy Hogan, Aston Villa manager, told me that though the Villa team were not anxious to give the Nazi salute, they yielded to the suggestion of the Football Association to do so.

The decision not to salute on the field was spontaneous and entirely due to the bad feeling created during the game.

Each time the Villa defence played the offside game there was a shout from the crowd of "Pind!" ("Shame!") and shrill whistling.

It was so hot today that each time there was a stoppage the Villa players lay flat on their backs, glad to have a rest. They made good use of the sponges sent to them by the trainer. The game became more of a walking match than a football match.

Most of the crowd were in shirt sleeves.

Broomie scored two of the English goals and Shell the third.

Henry Rose's story of England's victory over Germany on Saturday is on Page Seventeen.

LATEST
CENTRAL 8000

Weather: showery
(see Page 11)

VANISHED COUNT IS IN NAPLES

Scotland-yard were informed yesterday that Count Francis Jeremie Habsburg-Lothringen, thirty-two-year-old lord of the manor of Barham (Norfolk), who failed to surrender to his bail at Bow-street (W.C.) Police Court on Thursday, has arrived at Naples.

He was accused of obtaining £32 from Fortnum and Mason, Piccadilly, W., without revealing that he was an undischarged bankrupt.

His manor house at Barham was recently offered for sale.

Image 3:



Discussion

- 1) Which team was right – England who saluted or Aston Villa who did not?
- 2) Can you explain the motives behind the England team's actions?
- 3) What did the Villa team achieve?
- 4) What is the role of protest and who does it benefit?

Jesse Owens races past Nazis to strike Gold

Jesse Owens



Jesse Owens in 1936

James Cleveland "Jesse" Owens (September 12, 1913 – March 31, 1980) was an American track and field athlete who specialized in the sprints and the long jump. He participated in the 1936 Summer Olympics in Berlin, Germany, where he achieved international fame by winning four gold medals: one each in the 100 meters, the 200 meters, the long jump, and as part of the 4x100 meter relay team. He was the most successful athlete at the 1936 Summer Olympics. He has the Jesse Owens Award accolade named after him in honor of his significant career.

Berlin Olympics



Owens performing the long jump at the Olympics.

In 1936, Owens arrived in Berlin to compete for the United States in the Summer Olympics. Adolf Hitler was using the games to show the world a resurgent Nazi Germany. He and other government officials had high hopes that German athletes would dominate the games with victories (the German athletes achieved a "top of the table" medal haul). Meanwhile, Nazi propaganda promoted concepts of "Aryan racial superiority" and depicted ethnic Africans as inferior.

Owens surprised many by winning four gold medals: On August 3, 1936 he won the 100m sprint, defeating Ralph Metcalfe; on August 4, the long jump (later crediting friendly and helpful advice from Luz Long, the German competitor he ultimately defeated); on August 5, the 200m sprint; and, after he was added to the 4 x 100 m relay team, he won his fourth on August 9 (a performance not equaled until Carl Lewis won gold medals in the same events at the 1984 Summer Olympics).

Just before the competitions, Owens was visited in the Olympic village by Adi Dassler, the founder of the Adidas athletic shoe company. He persuaded Owens to use Adidas shoes, the first sponsorship for a male African-American athlete.

The long-jump victory is documented, along with many other 1936 events, in the 1938 film *Olympia* by Leni Riefenstahl.

On the first day, Hitler shook hands only with the German victors and then left the stadium. Olympic committee officials insisted Hitler greet every medalist or none at all. Hitler opted for the latter and skipped all further medal presentations. On reports that Hitler had deliberately avoided acknowledging his victories, and had refused to shake his hand, Owens said at the time:

"Hitler had a certain time to come to the stadium and a certain time to leave". "It happened he had to leave before the victory ceremony after the 100 meters. But before he left I was on my way to a broadcast and passed near his box. He waved at me and I waved back. I think it was 'bad taste' to criticize the man of the hour in another country".



Jesse Owens on the podium after winning the long jump at the 1936 Summer Olympics. L-R, on podium, Naoto Tajima, Owens, Luz Long.

Hitler expressed his feelings about Owens and Africans in private. Albert Speer, Hitler's architect and later war armaments minister, recollected:

Each of the German victories, and there were a surprising number of these, made him happy, but he was highly annoyed by the series of triumphs by the marvelous colored American runner, Jesse Owens. People whose antecedents came from the jungle were primitive, Hitler said with a shrug; their physiques were stronger than those of civilized whites and hence should be excluded from future games.

Resources

Original newsreel documentaries showing the heroism of Owens in Berlin

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QDkaOSGDweU&feature=related>

Discussion

- 1) Why is individual protest so effective – or is it?
- 2) What did this protest achieve?
- 3) What is the role of protest and who does it benefit?

Facing Down the Soviet Empire

Puck Off!!! - The Czechoslovak Hockey Riots

The **Czechoslovak Hockey Riots** were a short lived series of protests, mildly violent on occasion (several people were injured), that took place in response to the 1969 World Ice Hockey Championships.

After Soviet invasion into Czechoslovakia political ideals of Prague Spring were slowly but steadily replaced by politics of accommodation to the demands of Soviet Union. People in Czechoslovakia, unable to find other ways to express their opinion, reacted with few very visible but ultimately ineffective manifestations of disagreement.

On March 21 and 28, 1969, the Czechoslovak national ice-hockey team beat the Soviet team in the 1969 World Ice Hockey Championships in Stockholm. Throughout Czechoslovakia, possibly 500,000 fans crowded the streets of their cities to celebrate the wins. In some places, particularly Prague, the celebrations turned to protests against the Soviet military who continued to occupy the country after the Warsaw Pact invasion the previous August. While the majority of these demonstrations were peaceful, some turned violent as protesters attacked Soviet military units. In Prague, protesters ransacked the Soviet Aeroflot office, though some have suggested they were encouraged by State Security agents.

The protests were suppressed by Czechoslovak military and police, now under full control of the hardliners from the Communist Party. The events were used as a pretext to oust remaining leaders symbolizing Prague Spring from power. Among them, Alexander Dubček was forced to resign as First Secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, to be replaced by Gustáv Husák who started politics of "normalisation".

No active protests against presence of Soviet troops occurred thereafter. During years of normalisation citizens of Czechoslovakia saw hockey matches with the Soviet Union as a quiet, symbolic way of protest. Police forces were regularly set on alert but never used.

Resources

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OxcTUT8ipAE&feature=related>

The lyrics of the Russian song in the clip are "I don't like you" and that reflects how the two countries felt about each other.

Discussion

- 1) Can you explain what form of protest took place?
- 2) What is the role of protest and who does it benefit?

Shaming the oppressors with power, style and grace

Věra Čáslavská

Věra Čáslavská (born 3 May 1942) is a Czech gymnast. Blonde, cheerful and possessing impressive stage presence, she was generally popular with the public and won a total of 22 international titles, including seven Olympic gold medals, all in individual events (an all-time record among female Olympians).

In addition to her gymnastics success, Čáslavská is known for her outspoken support of the Czechoslovak democratization movement and her opposition to the Soviet-led invasion of Czechoslovakia. At the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City, she took this protest to the world stage by quietly looking down and away while the Soviet national anthem was played during the medal ceremonies for the balance beam and floor exercise event finals. While Čáslavská's actions were applauded by her countrymen, they resulted in her becoming a persona non grata in the new regime. She was forced into retirement and for many years was denied the right to travel, work and attend sporting events.

Čáslavská's situation improved in the 1980s after the intervention of members of the International Olympic Committee, and after the fall of Communism, her status improved dramatically. During the 1990s she held several positions of honor, including a term as President of the Czech Olympic Committee. As of 2008, she still resides in Prague and has opted to remain largely out of the public eye.

Protest at the 1968 Olympics

Čáslavská's wins at the 1968 Olympics were particularly poignant because of the political turmoil in Czechoslovakia. She had publicly voiced her strong opposition to soviet-style Communism and Soviet invasion, and had signed Ludvík Vaculík's protest manifesto "Two Thousand Words" in the spring of 1968. Consequently, to avoid being arrested, she spent the weeks leading up to the Olympics hiding in the mountain town of Šumperk, and was only granted permission to travel to Mexico City at the last minute.

At the Olympics, where she once again faced Soviet opposition, Čáslavská continued to subtly voice her views. After appearing to have won the gold medal on floor outright, the judging panel curiously upgraded the preliminary scores of Soviet Larisa Petrik, and declared a tie for the gold instead. All of this occurred on the heels of another very controversial judging decision that cost Čáslavská the gold on beam, instead awarding the title to Soviet rival Natalia Kuchinskaya. Clearly disheartened and angered by the politics that favored the USSR, she protested during both medal ceremonies by quietly turning her head down and away during the playing of the Soviet national anthem.

Aftermath

Čáslavská's countrymen revered her for her brave demonstration on the world's biggest stage. Her federation, however, was none too pleased. For her consistent support of the Czechoslovak democratization movement (the so-called "Prague Spring") in 1968, and during the purges which followed the Soviet-led invasion in August 1968, she was deprived of the right to travel abroad and participate in public sport events both in Czechoslovakia and abroad. Čáslavská was effectively forced into retirement, and was considered a persona non grata for many years in her home country.

Czech authorities refused to publish her autobiography, and insisted that it be heavily censored when it was released in Japan. She was granted leave to work as a coach in Mexico, but reportedly only when the Mexican government threatened to cease oil exports to Czechoslovakia. In the late 1980s, following pressure from Juan Antonio Samaranch, the president of the International Olympic Committee, who presented her with the Olympic Order, Čáslavská was finally allowed to work as a gymnastics coach and judge in her home country.

Resources

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lksl8O8_u7M&feature=related Original newsreel showing Čáslavská's disdain for Soviet national anthem

After splitting the group into 4 to look at all the resources above the following can be used

Discussion

- 1) Whose protest do you think was most effective and why?
- 2) Why is a sporting occasion so inviting for protesters?
- 3) Is there a limit to reasonable protest? Is it right to cause the cancellation of an event to promote a political cause?

Conclusion Activities

Ask each participant to choose their favourite form of protest from the examples displayed and to come up with something they would like to protest about for the upcoming London Olympics.

If they need prompting you can give them suggestions:

- Ensuring that there is a positive legacy for regeneration of East London
- Opening up more tickets to the public
- Observing religious/ cultural significant events if they clash with rules of sporting events
- Protest for a torch relay
<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/sport/olympics/article4465672.ece>
- London 2012 Olympics: protest against Spurs stadium plans gathers pace as Richard Scudamore meets fans
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/sport/olympics/8270232/London-2012-Olympics-protest-against-Spurs-stadium-plans-gathers-pace-as-Richard-Scudamore-meets-fans.html>
- Protests over horse 'cruelty' as equestrian fans threaten to boycott 2012 Olympics
Read more:
<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1240281/Protests-horse-cruelty-equestrian-fans-threaten-boycott-2012-Olympics.html#ixzz1YglhxBsw>
- London 2012 Olympics test event draws polite protest
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/sport/2011/jul/04/london-olympics-test-event-greenwich-park>

Get them to design their own protest using their favourite elements of the protests they've learned about in the method for the coming Olympics (this can be done individually or in small groups).

Ask them to plan out the protest and be prepared to explain what protests inspired them. Ask them to try to prepare a creative element of their protest that they can present to the rest of the group.

Ask each protest group/ individual to explain their protest and to present an element of it if possible (ie perform song/ flash mob/ show poster etc). After everyone has presented theirs conclude by breaking down each protest and discussing which elements of protest are the most popular- are these the strongest elements too?

See if there was a general consensus for popular protest topics among the group.

Has anything come up that people may want to take forward?